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# JESUS IS COMING

## Prophecy Studies - No.1

Jesus Is Coming is the truth with which we begin this series of studies on the subject of Bible prophecy—particularly as it concerns the end times and eternity. At the start, several points need to be made.

Prophecy, and the second coming of Christ, is a major Bible theme. For example, Christ's return is mentioned almost 2,000 times in the Bible—over 300 times in the New Testament alone. And the coming of Christ and His earthly reign is a prominent subject of 17 Old Testament books, and 7 out of every 10 chapters in the New Testament refer to Christ's return.

There have been disagreements on the interpretation of prophecy over the centuries. This has led some Christians to avoid studying the subject in any detail. One person I talked to threw up his hands and said, "Well, I guess I'm a pan-millennialist. I just hope it'll all pan out in the end!" But that is silliness!

As we can see from the above, God considered it important enough to devote a great deal of His Word to the topic. (Approximately ¼ of the Bible is prophetic.) And Revelation, the New Testament's chief prophetic book, is the only Bible book that promises a special blessing to those who read and study it (Rev. 1:3). Therefore, the subject is worthy of our careful and prayerful consideration.

One thing that helps us know how to interpret prophecy is that roughly half of the Bible's predictions have already been fulfilled. (Many relate to Christ's *first* coming.) And we learn from studying these that prophecy is to be understood literally. Jesus really was born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2), and born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). And He was literally "wounded for our transgressions" (Isa. 53:5). Yes, prophecy contains some symbols and picture language. But the context or a comparison with other Scripture usually reveals the literal meaning it is meant to convey. The saying of the old commentators is worth remembering: "If the plain sense makes good sense, seek no other sense."

An important key to understanding Bible prophecy is to keep in mind the distinction between Israel and the church.

ISRAEL is God's earthly people, a nation united by blood to Abraham, with a specific land given to them in perpetuity. God made a number of covenants with them that are yet to be fulfilled in an earthly setting.

THE CHURCH is God's heavenly people, not a nation with a God-given land, but a spiritual body made up of all nations, united by the baptizing work of the Spirit of God (I Cor. 12:12-13). Our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20).

In the studies to follow, we shall see how God's plan for these two groups is to be worked out. This in turn will help us understand some of the happenings in current events. Why was Israel reborn in 1948? And why does it remain at the centre of world affairs? Why are the nations of Europe coming together to form sort of a "United States of Europe"? The Bible provides answers to these and other questions.

While it is important for us to look forward to Christ's return (II Tim. 4:8), agreement on

the details of prophecy is not essential to personal salvation. Good Christian people differ on some points. We can hold definite views on the subject (and I believe we should do so) and still be charitable toward others who disagree. As a personal note, I can only say that what follows represents the fruit of over 40 years of studying the subject. And though unanswered questions remain no matter which interpretation is followed, I believe there are far fewer with the interpretation given here than with any other.

One issue that is worth considering as we start is the high standard God called for regarding the ministry of His prophets. While today's astrologers and fortune tellers can make vague pronouncements and some consider it remarkable if they are right once in awhile, God allows no such thing. There were two very specific tests to be applied to His prophets.

Test #1. The Test of Orthodoxy (Deut. 13:1-5). No one could be a true prophet and contradict what God had already revealed. Even working "signs and wonders" did not validate a prophet if he tried to turn people away from God and His Word.

Test #2. The Test of Accuracy...

1) How were God's people to test their prophets? And what was to happen to a prophet who failed the test (Deut. 18:20-22)?

INSIGHT: Another major point as we begin is the identity of the central Personage of prophecy. Most people accept the fact that a man named Jesus once walked the earth. To them, He was a good man and a great teacher. But they do not go much beyond that. So, what does the Bible say about Him? (Note: "Christ" is simply the Greek form of the Hebrew word "Messiah.")

2) What does First Timothy 2:5 teach about the nature of Christ?

3) What does John 1:1, 14 (and Heb. 1:8) teach about the nature of Christ?

4) What is the relationship of Christ to creation (Jn. 1:3; or Col. 1:15-18)?

5) What is the relationship of Christ to the nation of Israel (Matt. 16:15-17; or 26:63-64)?

6) What relationship does Christ have to lost sinners now (I Pet. 3:18; cf. Jn. 3:16)?

7) What relationship will Christ have to lost sinners in eternity (Jn. 5:22, 27; or Acts 17:31, and Rev. 21:27)?

8) What is the relationship of Christ to His church (Eph. 1:22-23)?

9) Christians claim Jesus is coming back again. But who says so?

☐ In Dan. 7:13-14 ☐ In Acts 1:10-11 ☐ In I Thess. 4:16 ☐ In Jude 1:14-15 ☐ In Rev. 22:20 (or Jn. 14:3)

INSIGHT: Each time Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, we say the same thing as in the above examples, because we are participating with the expectation of His return (I Cor. 11:26).

10) There are scoffers who mock the idea of the second coming. What is their argument (II Pet. 3:3-4)?

11) The scoffers reject the concept of judgment to come. What does God ask them to remember (II Pet. 3:5-7)?

12) Based on Jn. 14:3, if Christ fails to return, what would it say about Him?

13) If Christ does not come back again, what else will not happen (I Cor. 15:20, 23)?

INSIGHT: Paul says of Christians “I have betrothed you to one Husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (II Cor. 11:2; cf. Eph. 5:25-27). There are promises to the church, the bride of Christ, that cannot be fulfilled unless He returns to take us to Himself.

14) What is awaiting the bride of Christ that we would miss if He does not come back for us (Rev. 19:7, 9)?

15) If Christ does not return to reign, what event concerning the (Gentile) nations will not occur (Matt. 25:31-34, 41)?

INSIGHT: Christ is not only the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22), He is also Israel’s promised Messiah-King (Jn. 4:25-26). Many messianic promises were made concerning Israel which were not fulfilled at His first coming.

16) If Christ fails to return, what promise to Israel will remain unfulfilled (Lk. 1:31-33; or see Isa. 9:6-7)?

INSIGHT: Far from being an unimportant, minor area of doctrine, the truth about the return of Christ is taught in the Scriptures as having a significant effect on the believer’s life, day by day.

17) What place does this subject have in evangelism--proclaiming the gospel to the unsaved (Acts 17:29-31)?

18) And how should the awareness of Christ’s return motivate the Christian to share his faith (II Pet. 3:7, 9; Dan. 12:3)?

19) How should the return of Christ affect Christian conduct (Tit. 2:11-13; or see II Pet. 3:10-11, 13-14; I Jn. 3:2-3)?

20) How else should the knowledge of Christ’s return affect us as Christians? And why (I Cor. 15:52, 58)?

21) How should a confidence in Christ’s return make us feel? And why (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20-21)?

22) Why should Christians “love His appearing” (II Tim. 4:8)?

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